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Conference report

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CONFERENCE REPORT

Thomas A. Clark in Conversation with David Bellingham

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A conversation between Thomas A. Clark and David Bellingham held at the Poetry Library in Edinburgh during the Thomas A Clark conference organised by Alice Tarbuck.

DB: We often have long conversations about work when I come up to Pittenweem. Such conversations invariably circle around shared interests. As an opening for our conversation today, I'd like to read something you wrote about Peter Joseph, a painter friend, in which you articulate the weight of the work, the purpose of the work, and how it is situated:

There it stands, as we turn a corner or enter a room, a thing simple in itself, to which we give immediate assent, open as a face or the stance of a body, no more divisible than a plane of light upon a sloping roof or the curve of a hill under a clear sky. It is, in that first moment, a recognition, an apprehension of something complete and inevitable, with which, surprising though it is, we might almost have an appointment. And even in this initial frisson, there is that quality of reminiscence which often accompanies our first acquaintance with something that will deeply concern us.

You have often discussed, both in interviews and in conversation, a need you had early on to make work that was outside your head, the need to objectify things. This reminds me of something that Clive Bush picked up on, in an essay many years ago, from the beginning of William Carlos Williams' *Paterson*: [Williams] writes 'to make a start out of particulars'.¹ I'd like to offer you the opportunity to open this sense

of the 'thingness of a thing', in Heideggerian terms.² The sense of a flower being a flower, before it's a simile for something else. I feel this is quite an important aspect of what you do.

TAC: The 'thingness of things' is quite difficult to talk about. Shortly after I read Heidegger I discovered Husserl, and phenomenology in Husserl's terms is largely about trying to figure out what can be said to be 'thing', and what are our assumptions of [the thing].³ Are we seeing a stone, or is it the word 'stone', or is it everything we've learned about a stone? So the notion of particulars was just somewhere to begin. I began as a young writer thinking that I didn't really have anything that I wanted to write about. There's this notion that if you're a writer, you've got something to say, and I was in this peculiar position where I didn't have anything to say. What did one say? It had all been said, and people were talking all the time, and how could you add to that human conversation? I think the way into it was just to notice things: there's a bird, what's that bird called, I've never seen it before, what's the song like? That was a beginning, a way to begin to put together a poetry, out of perceived instances.

DB: The 'thing' of course is a sort of compound of sensations. Elsewhere, you've spoken about the work being an active response to the condition of things – and or the condition of place. Referring to Heidegger again, there is something he sets out very beautifully; he takes the example of a blue hammer to describe the simultaneous aspect of the colour blue and the object that is covered in it.⁴

The blue surface is only an aspect of the object, but blue is all we see **Figure 1**. Light bounces off the three-dimensional object and reveals the colour and shape of the hammer, and yet the hammer is a functional object, the functional aspect of which is only revealed through use. You pick up on this in your use of wildflowers. For example, the blue flower is something that is defined by its glow, if you like.⁵

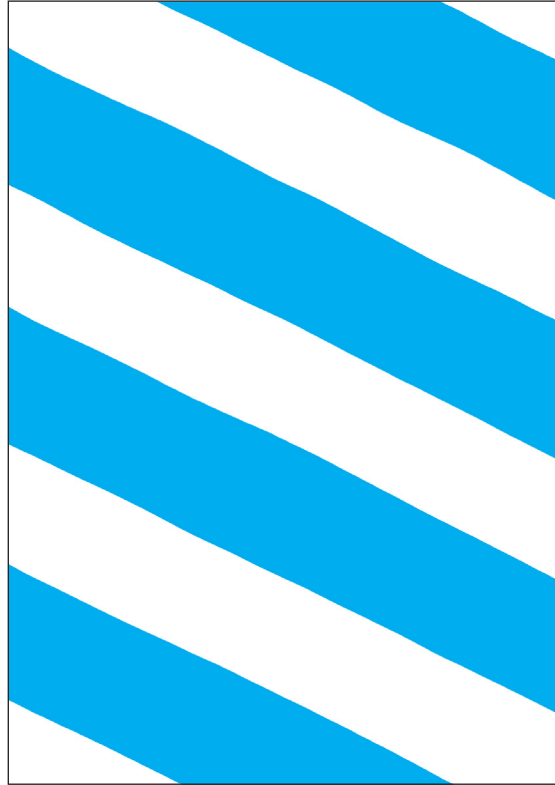


Figure 1: Five diagonal blue lines to brighten a designated space Thomas A Clark, David Bellingham.

TAC: That's one of the objectives of the work, to try to get back to a pure perception. But there is also a strong linguistic element, which isn't just the fact that the word 'stone' is composed of a certain number of letters, in a certain order. It is that, but additionally it is all the assumptions we have around the word 'stone'.

DB: What you are saying is that the word 'stone' comes with the weight of history. It comes with a history of usage, and clearly you are attentive to that history of usage.

TAC: There's an old understanding of poetry that it is denotation and connotation, and you want to keep both in play. You want to reference a willow, but there's also some sense that a willow has a history, in Elizabethan poetry, for instance, in Dowland's songs.⁶ I think the materiality of the poem is cautionary; it sets up a little

delay between the otherness of the willow and its capture in reference and association. A willow in a poem is the word 'willow' before it is anything else.

DB: You use a phrase like 'the materiality of a poem' as if we all know what that means. Can you describe what it means for you?

TAC: I guess that when you start reading a poem you shouldn't know where it's going to go. What you should get first of all are some sounds, a rhythm, some shapes that language can make. These are all prior to signification, and they survive signification. They survive not only meaning, but multiple meanings, and they have an effect, or an affect, before meaning. It might only be the slightest moment pre-sense, but the materiality, the corporeality of the poem has some kind of impact.

DB: You draw this out from time to time, in your use of permutation, for instance turning words over in phrases and clauses, repeating the names of colours, and things.

TAC: This is one of the differences between poetry and prose. Prose is, with some exceptions, transparent: it is like a window into the world; you go through the language and into what the language talks about. But poetry clouds the window, as it were; it always insists on itself. Even the oldest most traditional poetry, rhyming poetry, before what it talks about, it actually presents itself as an experience in itself. I like the way that poetry does both jobs at once; it conjures up a world or range of experience while playing a tune at the same time.

DB: So, there are contrasting linguistic modes that you bump into during the writing or reading of a poem. The pattern of the lines can read quite differently from the sense of the lines, just as the pattern of the words as they are placed in the line can differ from their customary usage. Another aspect of form that I want to discuss is the distinction between stanzas that are stacked on the page, and those that are placed individually across consecutive pages in a book. In your small publications you often place stanzas, one per page over a sequence of pages. In turning the pages

you create a breath, a pause, and I think that's quite important in the separating out, the drawing out of the 'thingness' of the text.

TAC: The thing that you and I both learned from Ian Hamilton Finlay and particularly from Wild Hawthorn Press, is what I think of as ways of presentation for the single poem, presentation as an aspect of form. Ian did it differently from how I do it, and I do it in a way which is still linked to the lyric and to melody. But, for instance, you might have a small book of six, eight, twelve pages, and one poem working through it, with one stanza per page. This is an extension of the stanza break. Usually the stanzas run down the page, and there's a certain compulsion to that, which I always find a bit disturbing. Everything flashes past your eyes. So by separating out the stanzas you can stay with them for longer. What then happens is that everything slows down, and it is up to the reader to build the rhythm of the poem by deciding when to turn the pages. Reading activates both the page and the book as spaces in themselves. Usually in poetry, the page or the book is a support, a container for the work. But it is possible to utilise both of those as aspects of form. The classic case is Mallarmé, with *Un Coup de Des*.⁷ He's probably the first instance of this, and still to this day I think the most sophisticated instance. There you have one poem which goes right through one book in different typefaces. But not only from page to page: different strands of the poem run right through the book, across pages. Not only do you have to read forward, you have to go back on yourself and follow other strands. It's an incredibly complex sense of space.

DB: But this requires that the reader physically orient themselves, which is unusual, I think, within the literary tradition. It is commonplace with art objects. If you go to a museum or a gallery, you orient yourself in relation to a painting or an object in space, that is clear. In order to understand the object, one has to walk around it, look at it from different angles, to see it from different positions in the space. If you are fond of a work you come back in different weathers and on different occasions: you get to know the work through its spatial location. This is, in a way, what you are proposing for the space of the book. The reader is required to

engage with the book physically in order to read it, the turning of the pages shifts light and shadow, the turning of the pages determines the pace of the poem. This is something very particular, which is different from the conventional book of poems where page breaks have little bearing on the form of the text. In your usage the syntactical arrangement of the parts of the poem, over a number of pages, is a central aspect of composition. This is key in a number of your works, and clearly key for Ian Hamilton Finlay.

TAC: That positioning of the reader in the poem may be correlate to the walker in the landscape. They are means of paying attention. Gertrude Stein was mentioned earlier, and one of my favourite stories of Gertrude Stein is, somebody asked her: 'why don't you use punctuation in your writing?' and she said 'punctuation is like someone trying to help you on with your coat, and I don't need anybody to help me on with my coat.'⁸ Punctuation is a laziness or politeness, a failure of attention.

Throughout my writing life, I've always worked with the short poem and in particular with the stanza and the line. They are the crux of it, for me. Either a poem that is one stanza only or has one stanza per page, or the single line. And one of the things that interests me about that is they are both whole and partial at the same time. I think the first person to really theorise the short poem was Edgar Allan Poe, and he was very influential, particularly in France, for writers like Baudelaire and Mallarmé. His idea with the short poem was simply that you could hold it in mind: you could grasp it as sense and form, and understand it as a whole. There is perhaps also a distinction – although Poe doesn't draw this – between a sense of the poem as something made, and as something written. Writing is fluid and ongoing but if you want to *make* a poem, or a table or a chair, you have to have some idea of the shape of the thing you're going to make. You don't just take some wood and hammer it together and see what happens, you have some kind of sense of a finished object.

To go back to the stanza and the line, when you come to the end of a stanza, you see it as a thing. The word 'stanza' comes from the Italian word for a room. Unless

we're incredibly grand, we don't usually walk from room to room. We go into a room, we hang about there, and we maybe rearrange the furniture. The thing with the short poem and the single stanza is that when you come to the end of them, you see it as a whole; you appreciate it as a form. But also, you're thrown back into it, so you can look around and pick up details, such as how the syllables and the consonants are arranged, the melody of a line, or whatever. This is intensified in the single line. I have a little card that says 'a line of poetry is a line' (Moschatel Press, 2011) and that's one of the first perceptions of a line; before you know what it says, before you know where it goes, you see it as a line. But there's also a kind of ripple effect, an eddy back into the line that's part of that perception. It is like a melody: a melody is only separate notes until it ends, and then you see it as a melody. Usually too, a line is not a complete unit of sense: it is phrasal, rather than complete. I like this sense of the wholeness and openness or incompleteness of the line. One of the things that I've done with the line is take it elsewhere, out of literary space. For instance, you can take a line or a phrase and put it on the window, or paint it on a wall, or place it on a piece of clothing. And some people might see that as a radical move but I see it as recognition of the self-sufficiency of the line.

DB: For poets like yourself who were connected to concrete poetry, there was an interest in the art world, in trying to create some kind of parallel between approaches to visual art production, and approaches to building and construction, literally building things out of words. Contemporaneous to the concrete tradition was conceptual art, people such as Lawrence Weiner, who I once interviewed.⁹ He told me about his studio and how it was quite full of things. It was at a time he was making an exhibition for the Transmission Gallery in Glasgow. I forget the precise wording, but the work read something like 'A keystone of chalk in an arch of slate'.¹⁰ He talked about having some pieces of slate and a block of chalk in his studio, making something from them, and then building some words to stand in the place of the physical construction he had made. That makes complete sense from a sculptor's point of view: he is a sculptor whose material is words. From a visual art point of view that is not radical, that is what sculptors do. Yet such an approach to material still seems quite

radical in the literary tradition. And you seem to bridge these two positions. Are you interested in Lawrence Weiner?

TAC: Yes. I like the way that Lawrence Weiner often describes his texts. He says that the work is composed of the text and the materials referred to. And actually that's quite a good description of poetry as well. Poetry is often sculptural in the sense that Lawrence Weiner talks about. If you keep both [the text and the materials referred to] in mind, what is that other than form and content? Certainly, form in the sense of consonants and vowels and phonemes and so forth: the nitty-gritty of poetry. The way that I often work is to have a line or a phrase that is situated in some way, in actual space. In a traditional poem, a line hooks over and, as the poem unfolds, it builds a context in which content can appear and can be meaningful. In the single line poem, I've chopped off all the other lines, but placed the single line in a context. But the context is no longer verbal, it's physical, so the line hooks over onto the situation it finds itself in.

DB: This hooking over of the line adds to and extrudes out of the actuality of its placement. Let's consider an example: there is a work of yours that was made for the wall called 'blue four word form'.¹¹ This work looks a little like an early conceptual artwork, but it also relates to what you are talking about.

TAC: Yes, there are works, including 'a delay of eight syllables' (Moschatel, 1996), which are trying to alert people to that aspect of poetry, that poetry isn't just some kind of dreamy imagery that floats through your head, that it has this physical base to it. And I think again that's not some smart theoretical position: it is what poetry has always done. If it has rhyme, it's saying 'hey, I'm a poem'.

DB: Perhaps we could return to your concern for of the object of the poem, or the poem as object. You make a lot of cards and folded works that stand up by themselves. We've talked about sculpture, many of your works can sit on a table, sit on a mantelpiece, and sit on a bookcase. They don't lie flat. They are almost refusing their proper place between pages. They are not asleep, they are awake on the table. And I like that sense of awakensess. Perhaps you could speak a bit about that.

TAC: Well that's absolutely it. This again comes back to Ian Hamilton Finlay, who in the mid-sixties, about the time that I first met him, made this astonishing little discovery that if you took a piece of card, and folded it in half, it could stand up and support itself. And then if you take the words and put them on the front of the card, something equally astonishing happens, which is that poetry comes out of imaginative space, out of literary space, and into actual space. It shares the space with you. That early discovery in Ian's work is what led to him being able to work in galleries, in public situations, ultimately to the garden at Little Sparta. So I think that's one of the things that you and I both learned from Ian, even though we take it to different places. But it is also for me part of this idea that, if you place something somewhere, like a vase of flowers, that's obviously a deliberate act but then you walk away and forget about it. Later on you can come in to the room and find the flowers there. I sort of like having that relation to poetry, that you don't always have to know where the poem is, in what particular book, take it down from a particular shelf to find it. You can come in and be surprised by it.

DB: Another opportunity that the discipline of making a small card offers is that you can do it very quickly. You can write something in the morning and you can print it in the afternoon. You can put it in an envelope and send it – perhaps there is only one recipient, perhaps there are a thousand. There is something functional about this spontaneous method of working combined with the immediacy of a direct correspondence. Almost like the breath of the poem, the breath of the work when read aloud, something that has a very brief duration between its production and its delivery. There can be a conversation in some kind of believable time, as opposed to the extended, artificial time frame of composition, editing, publishing: an eighteen month to two year delay before you see the poems in print, which frustrates everybody.

TAC: Well in the early years of the press, the early seventies, it is hard to think back to this now, but postage cost nothing at all. We'd print off – we had a little Adana printing press – we'd print off some copies and then put them in envelopes and

send them round to everybody we thought might be interested. Of course, there are downsides to that speed! But the gain was the possibility of poetry as a gift, that might arrive by post. I liked the lightness and generosity of that.

If you want a poem on a card, or a poem that has one stanza to a page, or one word to a page, you have to do it yourself. There are no publishers who will do that for you. Carcanet are quite longsuffering, but if I were to go and say, 'I've got this great idea for my next book. Its going to be eight pages long, and there's going to be three words on each page', I think I know what the answer would be. But that, as I think I've tried to explain, is not a whim. It is an aspect of form. You find that if you isolate the words in that sort of way, something else happens that isn't possible if they run down the page.

DB: Perhaps it is not that a publisher wouldn't publish it, but the act of self-publishing as a declaration of independence which is something quite distinct from sharing the responsibility of the creative object with a publisher and with an editor. The fact that a card or little clutch of cards, or a small book, might accompany a letter extends and enhances that correspondence. As with the writing of letters, the distribution of small publication incites response in kind. At least in the pre-internet days this was the hope. When I came across Moschatel Press and Wild Hawthorn Press, my feeling wasn't particularly 'oh, its great that these guys do this', it was more 'this is something I have to do, too'. So there is this sense of something that needs to be responded to, which does not always happen with an officially published book in the same way. With a book, a well-edited collection, you are outside it: it is a polished cultural object. Whereas however well produced, there is something indefinite and fragmentary about the small publication. Each card or booklet is a separate thing, which can be understood as an aspect of a larger ongoing project. We have talked about Little Sparta, and I think we both share the opinion that the great work of Ian Hamilton Finlay is not Little Sparta but the Wild Hawthorn Press. And you could make the case, as I would, that it has a place within modernist texts. It can be compared to compound works such as Ezra Pound's *Cantos*, or Charles Olson's *Maximus* poems.

TAC: Ian would have hated those comparisons.

DB: The point being, there are classical references, they are ongoing, they are written through time, and they are big works that are built, constructed out of fragments. They are built out of parts of things. And I think that is exactly what Ian did with the Wild Hawthorn Press over his working life. In terms of the ideas and the motivations, clearly they are very different, and perhaps the effect and the achievement of Ian's work is really quite different, but nevertheless the mode and the need to compile something over time is something that is shared.

TAC: Yes. I mean all the names, you mention are modernists, including Ian. I think that concrete poetry in Ian's work makes him a really late modernist writer. I see myself as being hugely indebted to that, but separate from it. A thing about the *Cantos*, and the *Maximus* poems, and indeed Ian's whole oeuvre, is they are hugely ambitious. They all wanted to write the next great modernist poem. I'm kind of more interested in what I'm starting to call 'poor poetry', which is much more low key. There is an American artist called Jason Dodge who has his own publishing company which publishes books of poetry and his press is called 500 Places.¹² The reason for the name is that he produces editions of five hundred copies, so each copy goes to a different place. One of the things I like about the card, the small book, is that it goes around and finds a place for itself, it makes a place for itself. I'm much more interested in doing that, in trickling through a culture, than in making the big statements. In old Celtic culture, there were two kinds of bards. There were the high bards, and there were the low bards. And the high bards were the most educated people in the culture, and they sat next to the king and they wrote about battles and the deeds of heroes. The low bards were just ordinary people, no different from anybody else, except for the fact that they happened to write poetry, and they wrote about the place they lived in, wrote about the joys and sorrows of the place. And I feel much closer to the low bards than the high bards.

DB: That is clear. But I think there is more ambition in the poetry than perhaps you are letting on. I understand the need to camouflage these things slightly. Politically, I

am on board. I think you are right. You are a low bard, with aspirations. It may well be true that a few cards in an envelope trickle out into the world, and are made available as a singular experience, as you might stumble upon a stone on a country walk, that is beautiful, there's something very pure about that. And yet, when you have a library like [the Scottish Poetry Library] that has a large holding, I don't know how many hundreds of Moschatel Press books there are here, but there are some hundreds, something happens in their accumulation. It might not be a modernist cairn, but it is a cairn of some kind. Something happens in this sedimental build-up of images, observations and ideas, and I am interested in what this archive achieves – in what it amounts to.

TAC: Yes. I mean, there are advantages in thinking you're writing poor poetry rather than the next *Maximus* poem, and one is that you can make little gestures. As you say, you can have an idea in the morning, print it in the late morning, send it out in the afternoon post. It is the understanding that you don't have to do everything at once, that the stakes aren't that high. But nevertheless, as a writer you do have certain concerns about a fairly coherent output. So, over a lifetime of work, little shifts and variations can build up into something richer and more complex.

DB: Yes. I think that coherency of approach is clear to anyone who might read through the work that has built up over a forty five year period.

TAC: Its something I notice a lot with Ian's work with Wild Hawthorn Press. Often, you'd say to people, 'well this is amazing, what's going on there, it's an extraordinary body of work'. And they'd say 'oh but I saw some of those things and they weren't anything at all'. And they'd seen two or three of them, and they couldn't add them together, couldn't see how they amounted to anything. But if you can come in here and look at the archive, that's a different thing.

DB: It is like that populist put-down 'I could have written that': the obvious retort being – well you didn't, Tom did or Ian did. It is as if work that appears in a simple and straightforward idiom, cannot lead to rich and layered interpretations.

The implication that sharing the work via the post can create a testing ground for the work links quite neatly into the idea of collaboration. You have often collaborated with other people, particularly with Laurie Clark, your wife. And I am interested in how the use of, let's say, a suite of drawings, can sometimes be situated within a suite of poems, and how that extends some of those things we were speaking about earlier, the delay, the pause. Traditionally, in artist/writer collaborations, the writer might have a text that he asks the artist to illustrate; in such instances there is a subservient role for the illustrations. But the way you work seems very different from this. In the typical case of a folding card with a drawing on the front and a line or two of text within, it is almost as if you give the image precedence. In the book 'Exchanges' that you made with Ian Hamilton Finlay, you respond to each other's poems, while Laurie's drawings sit in parallel to the texts as a third voice.

TAC: At the beginning, for a long time, we tried to avoid this notion of illustration, of one thing being subservient, and we thought more about word and image being placed side by side. Just as, if you can print on a certain kind of paper, you can have a certain colour, a certain arrangement and you somehow feel that this is not extraneous to the poem and somehow builds a context for it. So the drawing is part of the mood or feel of the poem. It also adds something not only that you couldn't do yourself, but also that you couldn't see yourself. Even if I sometimes do say to Laurie, could you draw me a tree or a bird or something, and even though I know her drawing so well over this length of time, it's always different from how I've imagined it, and it always is surprising. The drawing itself is always very sharp, somehow it seems to focus the poem, in a way that [the poem] seems a bit amorphous without it.

DB: It seems to me that when it works, at its best, there is a balance between word and image that extends both elements. We were talking about the permutational shifts in stanzas that say similar things in slightly different ways. Just as you have a group of drawings that come in and approach the same subject in

their own way. So it is not that you are trying to avoid subject: as in – if stones and running water are mentioned in the poem, we had better not have a drawing of stones and running water, but an aeroplane or an elephant instead. Of course, you have a drawing of stones and running water that iterates the theme in its own way.

TAC: Yes, and repetition again. If you mention stone and water and you look at stone and water, it reinforces the message or the rhythm or the character of the poem. I'm starting to work with other artists in a much looser way, in that I often set up some words or an idea and ask them to go and do something. You and I did a piece about diagonal lines, and I'm working with Diane Howse at the moment on a book of photographs that Diane has taken, and my only contribution will be the title of the book. It's a really interesting way of working because another person brings a whole layer of meaning and particularity, that you couldn't supply yourself. It is like going back to the whole found poem idea, where you want to get out of your head, and be surprised by the work that you make. Other people bring that level of richness and surprise.

DB: I was going to ask you about this. *Some Particulars* (Jargon Society, 1971) came up earlier and that uses exclusively found language. Perhaps there comes a point where you can find language within your own body of work. We have talked about repetition within a poem but clearly there is repetition over the decades. How much do you go back and re-read? Many musicians will not listen to their own recordings; however we can assume there is a vocabulary of musical possibility that is maintained over time. Do you ever go through your notebooks and think 'Oh I haven't dealt with that topic for a while'? Perhaps the idea of the difficulty of green – 'oh that's not a problem I have wrestled with for a year or two, it is time for some green lines'.

TAC: I was surprised that I'd used the word 'green' so much, I must admit. I think the first time that I consciously came across [repetition of vocabulary], was when I was young, I had a period of reading the work of Simone Weil. There is

a whole cluster of words in her work that come up again and again. She uses the words 'gravity' and 'grace', the word 'waiting' a lot, and the word 'attention'. Those are words that I've continued in my work as a legacy from Simone Weil, together with pairings of my own; dawn and dusk, yellow and blue, pine and birch, see **Figure 2**. But more important than that was the understanding that there were certain words or concepts that you could come back to. You could visit them again and find new things in them. Indeed, so far as I do go back and look at my work, its not that I deliberately go back and read it, it is that I have a kind of echo in my head that maybe I've dealt with something before. I go back and I find it, and think actually, there's more that could be said there.

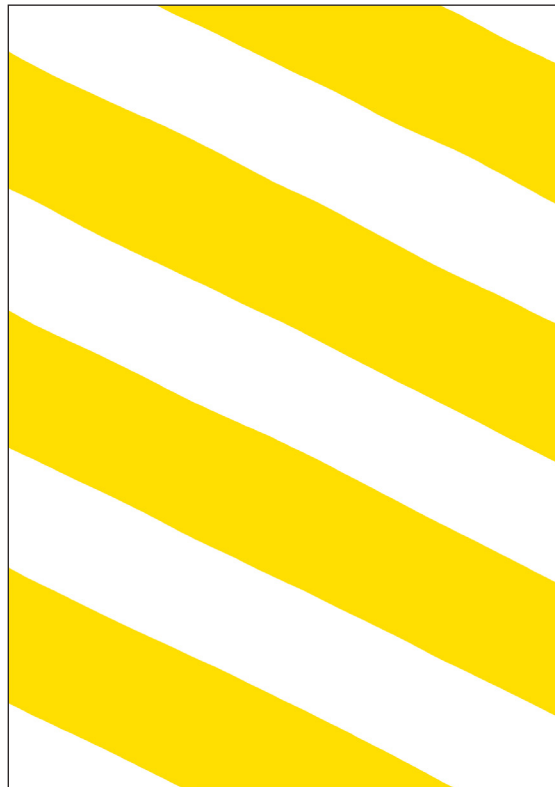


Figure 2: Five diagonal yellow lines to brighten a designated space Thomas A Clark, David Bellingham.

DB: The clarity of this is – if you expect the culture to reflect on itself and learn from its own lessons, then you need to do that within the project too. I want to take the opportunity to find another way of describing what the object of a poem might be. You made a very beautiful work for the [Edinburgh International Book Festival] here a few years ago, called ‘A Corncrake in Charlotte Square’ (Moschatel, 2015). My experience of that work was the very subtle sound of birdsong in Charlotte Square. The work projected an audio recording of the call of the corncrake into the hum of city centre traffic; the living sound of the city interrupted by the ghost of a bird that is no longer to be found there. I think that somewhere you refer to this as an apology to the corncrake that had been shifted out of its home to make way for the new town, to make way for the traffic, to make way for the ordered lines of stone. I am interested to know where the poem is in this work. I think it is a poem, but it is very different in its form from some of the other poems you have made.

TAC: You’ll be surprised to hear that I’m not going to answer that! Instead, I’m going to pose another question. Why is it that we think we know what poetry is? There’s a little poem by the Japanese poet Ryōkan, who is one of my favourites, and it says:

‘Who says these poems are poems?
My poems are not poems.
When this is understood,
we can begin to talk about poetry’.

[End]

Notes

- ¹ Clive Bush is Emeritus Professor of English Literature at King’s College London. The quote is from Book One of: William Carlos Williams, *Paterson*, (Penguin: New York, 1963), p. 3.
- ² See: Heidegger, Martin, ‘The Thing’ trans. Albert Hofstadter, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), pp. 163–184.
- ³ See: Husserl, Edmund, and Richard Rojcewicz, *Thing and space: lectures of 1907*, (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2010).

- ⁴ See: Heidegger, Martin, *Being and truth* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010).
- ⁵ Clark's works containing a blue flower include: *In Dunino Den*, 2013; *to anticipate the blue flower*, 2014; *the brown bird*, 2009; *My heart is empty of ambition [after Novalis]*, 2009. The blue flower is a reference to Novalis' 'blue flower' of Romanticism. See: Novalis, *Henry of Ofterdingen*, (Cambridge, MA: John Owen, 1842).
- ⁶ Clark may be thinking of 'The Willow Song' from Act Four Scene Three of Shakespeare's *Othello*, which predates the play, and was originally a lute tune. See: Dowland, John, and David Nadal, *Lute songs of John Dowland* (New York: Dover Publications, 1998).
- ⁷ Mallarmé, Stéphane, and Charles Chadwick. *The meaning of Mallarmé: a bilingual edition of his Poesies and Un coup de dés* (Aberdeen: Scottish Cultural Press, 1996).
- ⁸ The correct quotation is as follows: 'A comma by helping you along holding your coat for you and putting on your shoes stops you from living your life as actively as you should lead it and to me for many years and I still do feel that way about it only now I don't pay as much attention to them, the use of them was positively degrading.' Gertrude Stein, 'Poetry & Grammar', quoted in ed. Kwasny, Melissa, *Toward the open field: poets on the art of poetry, 1800–1950* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2004), p. 295.
- ⁹ See: Tate Gallery Website, Online resource: <<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/lawrence-weiner-7743>> Accessed 23.05.2017.
- ¹⁰ Weiner, Lawrence, *An Arch Afforded/In a Wall of Stone/with/A Keystone of Chalk/&/Imposts of Slate*, (Glasgow, Transmission Gallery, 1991).
- ¹¹ A printed card of this work was published by Moschatel Press in 2011.
- ¹² Five Hundred Places Press: Online resource: <<http://www.fivehundredplaces.com/>> Accessed 23.05.2017.

Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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